



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 243
Jane Philbrick, CEO
Northeast Wool

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My name is Jane Philbrick. I live in Redding, Connecticut. I am the CEO and founder of Northeast Wool, a local wool garments and textiles company in Bridgeport, Connecticut, deplasticizing and decarbonizing what we wear and how we furnish our commercial spaces, institutions, and homes.

I speak today in support of **Senate Bill 243**, as I believe that the promotion of regenerative agriculture is the single most important step Connecticut can take to address climate change. Our task with climate change is not just to stop putting carbon into the atmosphere, but to get existing atmospheric carbon back into the soil where it will build soil fertility. On a global scale, transitioning from conventional agricultural practices to regenerative agriculture will not just halt climate change, but reverse it.

An essential element of regenerative agriculture in Connecticut is pasture-raised sheep. Grazing sheep stimulate root growth, pulling carbon out of the atmosphere and into the soil, where it improves soil health. Their manure fertilizes the soil, eliminating the need for petrochemical fertilizer. Sheep are also a carbon sink. The carbon in the grass they eat is converted to carbon in their fleece, which is 50% carbon. This carbon is retained in the wool garments made from their fleece. Sheep are carbon sinks on four hooves. Wearers of wool garments are carbon sinks on two feet. The yarn in wool knitwear can be unraveled and reused. At the very end of its long useful life, a wool garment can be put back into the soil where it biodegrades and improves soil health. Wool will be the fiber of the twenty-first century, replacing synthetic textiles made from plastic.

I come to you as a women entrepreneur to highlight the leading role of other women entrepreneurs in Connecticut's wool ecosystem. Most of Connecticut's sheep farmers are women. Connecticut's artisanal spinning mills are owned by women. It is mostly women who design and make wool garments, and mostly women who buy them. When you pay and reimburse sheep farmers for implementing climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices, as provided for in **Senate Bill 243**, you are investing in the foundation of a wool value chain that is dominated by women from soil to shoulder.

This is incredibly significant because Connecticut has a dismal history of investing in women entrepreneurs. For example, only 15% of the investments by the state's venture capital arm, Connecticut Innovations, have been in woman-owned businesses.

This is in part because the state's historic investment focus areas, including biotech, financial services, and IT, are sectors of the economy dominated by male-owned businesses. Likewise, the initial focus of both state and national decarbonization efforts has been in the areas of energy and transportation, both sectors dominated by male-led firms. **Senate Bill 243**, by seizing the transformative opportunity of regenerative agriculture, will also bring gender balance to economic development in Connecticut. It will be a great start, but much more is needed. Connecticut should lead the nation in moving decarbonization beyond energy and transportation to agriculture, consumer goods, and construction—to change what we eat, what we wear, and how we build and furnish our homes and offices. These sectors represent a larger percentage of carbon emissions than energy and transportation. They are also sectors where there is a higher percentage of women entrepreneurs.

Support regenerative agriculture. Build the larger green economy. Invest in women entrepreneurs. A formula for success in the twenty-first century.

Thank you.